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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000571

SIPDIS

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NSC PASS TO DAMON WILSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH NEW FM KUBIS

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe Vallee as per E.O. 12958 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 6.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. Ambassador met with Slovakia's new Foreign Minister Jan Kubis on July 12. Kubis emphasized that "continuity" will be the theme of Slovakia's relationship with the EU, NATO and the U.S. Kubis told the Ambassador he will work to make a "Statesman" out of the new PM Robert Fico, and will coordinate closely with the U.S. Embassy as he and the new DefMin draft a plan for the future of Slovak Armed Forces in Iraq. Kubis discussed the possibility of Slovak participation in a PRT in Afghanistan with his Hungarian counterpart. End summary.

IRAQ  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Ambassador opened the meeting with Kubis by raising the issue of Slovak troop participation in Iraq, noting the debate now is not about the run-up to 2003, but about what is best for the Iraqi people. Ambassador noted that with respect to troop withdrawals, there were three ways countries had dealt with the issue, the right way, the wrong way, and the preferred way. The wrong way was unilateral disengagement (a la Spain); the right way is consultation and coordination with allies; and the preferred way is continued Slovak engagement in Iraq. Ambassador noted his disappointment at Smer's vitriolic attack on U.S. Iraq policy in the final days of the campaign.

[1](#)4. (C) Kubis responded that he had just had a conversation with Fico about the PM's need to change from an opposition figure to a statesman. The government, Kubis told Fico, must act with one voice across the ministries on key issues. Kubis said he had privately chastised Fico for a recent outburst against the European Socialists, noting the kind of trouble that lack of discipline had created for Fico. (Comment: Fico accused the European Socialists of having reprimanded his party for its coalition with the Slovak Nationalist Party upon the instigation of 'multi-national corporations, conservatives or Hungarians. Fico's close friend and new Speaker of Parliament had acknowledged to us earlier that Fico had made "a big mistake" in his approach to the socialists. End comment.) Kubis recommended the Ambassador reinforce the message that Fico is now in the big leagues and needs to act accordingly when they meet on July [1](#)4.

[1](#)5. (C) Kubis had a late dinner yesterday with new DefMin Kasicky to discuss Iraq. According to Kubis, "We are developing a position, the two of us and the PM, that will show that we can be considered a reliable ally and not a

country that will cut and run." The position contemplates transforming the Iraq mission in recognition of the greater current role of Iraqi security forces, including training of Iraqis in Iraq. On the margins of his presentation to the diplomatic corps on July 10, Kubis had talked to the Iraqi Ambassador resident in Vienna, who reinforced the view of the need to help. A complete position should be presented to the cabinet the week of July 17. Kubis offered to meet informally with the Ambassador over the weekend (July 15 or 16) to seek feedback on the "working document." The Ambassador accepted Kubis' offer.

¶6. (C) Action request: We would welcome Department and DoD ideas on alternative roles the Slovak military could play in Iraq; if possible prior to the Ambassador's weekend meeting with Kubis.

#### OTHER FOREIGN ACTIVITIES

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¶7. (C) Kubis said the new GoS is thinking creatively about a more robust Afghanistan mission, including considering Provincial Reconstruction Teams, an option which he had discussed with his Hungarian counterpart on July 11.

¶8. (C) Ambassador urged Kubis to continue strong support for democratizing countries, especially Belarus, Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Western Balkans. Kubis responded that he had a strong background in supporting democracy in Central Asia and understood the issues well. With respect to Belarus, he noted that the GOS would not be "as far out on the limb" as the previous government, and that Slovakia's position would more closely approximate that of the EU. He pointedly noted his excellent relations with the Regional German Marshall Fund Director Pavol Demes, and the people at Pontis Foundation who are active in Belarus, and would reach

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out, but that Fico had drawn a "ceiling" when it came to involvement in Belarus. He suggested that their current strong position on Cuba would continue.

#### ENERGY

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¶9. (C) Noting the "complex" relationship between Russia and the US, the Ambassador reinforced U.S. interest in regional energy security, particularly with respect to open access and transparency in pipeline issues. Kubis believes it impossible for the EU to ever come up with a common position, and stated his belief that EU member states would continue to look for national benefits. Kubis found NABUCCO interesting but he questioned the financial viability. Kubis is supportive of the Economy Ministry's buyback options for the 49% stake in Transpetrol currently held by Yukos, but he noted that "these things are not so simple," and suggested it may be complicated to get Yukos to agree to what the GOS wants.

¶10. (C) In advance of Kubis' trip to Poland next week, the Ambassador alerted him to the GOP's interest in PERN's Transpetrol acquisition, noting USG interest and concern about transparency and open access and that there might be some American investor interest. Kubis suggested more aggressive engagement between Slovakia and Russia and China on economic issues.

#### COALITION

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¶11. (C) Kubis said he expects to spend some time cleaning up after Slota's "outbursts." Slota had called him before his July 11 trip to Budapest to complain about "surrendering to the Hungarians" and Kubis demanded a meeting and laid down the law regarding Slovakia's responsibilities in the international community. That said, Kubis noted that he represents the Slovak, not the Hungarian, government and would be firm on issues of national interest. In a private meeting, he pointedly warned Slovak-Hungarians resident in

Budapest not to become pawns in a political game between Slota and Orban or other Hungarian nationalists. He noted that, strangely, HZDS is turning out to be the most NATO supportive and transatlantic of the coalition partners.

#### VISAS

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¶12. (C) Kubis said he would speak forcefully about any attempt to link troop levels to visas ("this insults our honor") and would speak regularly about visa issues generally; though he also noted that "pressure" like that being exerted by the Czechs in the EU on this issue is not always effective.

#### CALL TO SECRETARY RICE

¶13. (C) Kubis would like to phone the Secretary as soon as possible, and said that he had "had interesting conversations with Lavrov, the Chinese, the Koreans, and the Japanese" about North Korea. Kubis would also like to meet the Secretary in Washington DC either before or after the

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Ministerial meeting of the UNSC on July 24, but only after he had received "clarity on Iraq" from his own side.

VALLEE